Strength matters: Self-presentation to the strongest audience rather than lowest common denominator when faced with multiple audiences in social network sites

Abstract

On social network sites (e.g. Facebook), individuals self-present to multiple audiences simultaneously twenty-four hours a day. Prior research has inferred this results in a lowest common denominator effect (LCDE) whereby people constrain their online presentation to the standards of their strictest audience. However, this existing work neglects to address differences in the 'value' (social/economic) of the audience. Through the lens of self-presentation theory, we argue that it is not the strictest audience that constrains behavior but the strongest (i.e. that which has the highest score for standards and value combined). We call this the strongest audience effect (SAE). The aim of this research is to examine and contrast the LCDE and SAE. A survey of young Facebook users (n=379) provides support for the SAE when compared to LCDE, with the strength of the strongest audience predicting behavioral constraint and also social anxiety. Additional insights are generated into which audiences are perceived as the strongest. This study contributes a novel and more holistic lens to understand self-presentation in the presence of multiple audiences in social network sites.

Keywords: Impression management; Self-presentation; Social anxiety; Behavior; Social Media; Facebook

1. Introduction

Social network sites (SNS), such as Facebook, are now ubiquitous and highly ingrained in the lives of their users. SNS are arenas for self-presentation where people construct, co-create and maintain online personas (Rui & Stefanone, 2013; Seidman, 2014; Tifferet & Vilnai-Yavetz, 2014). The aim of self-presentation is to instill a desired image in the minds of the audience or at least avoid portraying one that is undesired. This process involves catering one's public persona based on the standards of the audience (Leary, 1996; Goffman, 1973). Unlike offline self-presentation, SNS provide a novel challenge: the simultaneous presence of multiple audiences (Binder, Howes, & Sutcliffe, 2009; De Wolf, Willaert, & Pierson, 2014).

The issue is that multiple audiences (e.g. guardians, employers, partners, close friends) are perceived to hold heterogeneous standards of what they would deem a desired image (Marder, Joinson, & Shanker, 2012). Therefore it is difficult to maintain congruence with all standards at once, when most content is visible *en masse*. The purpose of this paper is to provide novel insight into impression management by users in the presence of multiple audiences. Marwick and Boyd (2011) found this circumstance to result in the lowest common denominator effect (LCDE), whereby users constrain their self-presentation in line with the standards of their strictest audience (see also Hogan, 2010). This constraint is carried out through the practices of self-censorship and self-cleansing (i.e. removing undesired content) (Lampinen, Tamminen, & Oulasvirta, 2009; Lang & Barton, 2015; Peters, Winschiers-Theophilus, & Mennecke, 2015). The LCDE is highly cited, providing an

appealing understanding of the phenomenon, however, using self-presentation theory we argue that this supposition is incomplete, that it is not the 'strictness' of audiences that drives behavior but the 'strength'.

Self-presentation theory asserts that the motivation for an individual to manage their public persona is not just predicted by the standards of the audience but also their 'value' (Leary & Kowalski, 1995). Such value is largely determined by the perceived social and economic losses and gains that an audience has the power to inflict. Value and standards are understood together as audience 'strength' (Leary, 1996). Presenting to audiences who are perceived as 'strong' has been associated with greater feelings of social anxiety (i.e. the emotion that ensues when it is perceived that an undesired image has or will be portrayed) and increased impression management (Jackson & Latané, 1981; Leary & Kowalski, 1995).

It follows that the LCDE, which solely contemplates audience standards and neglects value, is imperfect. Based on the LCDE people will constrain their behavior to meet the expectations of their strictest audience even if this is of little or no value (e.g. ex-boss, younger sibling), a notion that makes little sense. This argument exposes a void in the current understanding of self-presentation in the presence of multiple audiences on SNS requiring further theorization and empirical support. We propose the strongest audience effect (SAE) as a means to close this gap. SAE contends that people constrain their online persona with regards to the 'strongest' audience (i.e. that which holds the highest score for standards and value combined). The aim of this study is to examine the efficacy of LCDE (i.e. strictest audience) against the newly theorized SAE (i.e. strongest audience) in explaining self-presentation in the presence of multiple audiences. Specifically, this paper will assess the significance of the strictest and strongest audience in predicting self-presentation constraint (i.e. self-censorship and self-cleansing) as well as social anxiety. Additional insights are also generated into which audience groups are perceived as the strictest and strongest.

2. Theoretical background

2.1 Self-presentation

In everyday life people present themselves to others (i.e. their audience) both offline and online. Self-presentation (or similarly impression management) is a process that involves controlling impressions revealed to audiences (Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Goffman, 1973). The aim is to instill the desired image in the minds of others. This is achieved through manipulating certain aspects that contribute to one's public persona (e.g. vocabulary, tone of voice, clothes worn) (Goffman, 1973). Self-presentation is motivated by three goals: personal gains (social and economic), self-esteem, and to sustain an identity project (Leary, 1996). These motivations are by no means mutually exclusive. The degree of motivation increases with two main factors: discrepancy between the current and desired image, and the value (or importance) of the image in achieving the three goals above (Beck, 2004; Leary, 1996; Leary et al., 1994).

The degree of motivation to manage impressions is thus inextricably linked to the presenter's perception of audience standards and the value of the audience to the presenter. Together these two factors combine to denote the 'strength' of an audience (Leary & Kowalski, 1995). Strong audiences are those that are important to impress

(or not to disappoint) and that hold characteristics such as knowledge, status, beauty, and esteem (*ibid*). Social interactions with strong audiences are associated with a higher motivation to manage impressions for two main reasons. First, the presenter perceives the potential for personal losses or gains to be higher and the opportunities to enhance or damage self-esteem to be greater (Bohra & Pandy, 1984; Hendricks & Brickman, 1974). Second, strong audiences are likely to have stricter expectations of the desired impression they demand from the presenter, therefore increasing the chance of a discrepant presentation (Latané & Harkins, 1976; Jackson & Latané, 1981).

Social anxiety results from the prospect or presence of a negative evaluation by others within a social interaction (Leary & Kowalski, 1995; Schlenker 1980). Therefore, assuming the interaction is of value to the presenter then any perceived discrepancy between the current/potential projected image with the standards of the audience gives rise to social anxiety. Jackson and Latané (1981) found that when people were asked to envisage themselves singing in front of audiences of different strengths, stronger audiences were associated with increased nervousness and tension. In situations where people become socially anxious impression management is employed to reconcile any discrepancies with audience standards (Leary & Kowalski, 1995). Studies have shown a positive relationship between audience strength and the use of 'face saving' behaviors enacted to avoid an undesired image (Brown, 1970; Brown & Garland, 1971). In summary, strength of an audience is a function of both their standards and value. Furthermore, audience strength is positively associated with the degree of impression management and social anxiety connected with social interactions.

2.2 Online multiple audience problem

SNS present a novel challenge for self-presentation. Unlike offline life where people can segregate audiences (e.g. colleagues, family, friends) through time and space, thus allowing self-presentation to be catered accordingly (Goffman, 1973), on SNS such segregation is problematic. The selves presented on SNS are largely subject to simultaneous surveillance by multiple audiences that can occur twenty-four hours a day. In this paper we refer to this issue as the *online multiple audience problem* (OMAP). However, previous literature has adopted a plethora of terms including: *context collapse* (Marwick & Boyd, 2011), *problem of conflicting social spheres* (Binder et al., 2009), *group co-presence* (Lampinen et al., 2009), and *bridging of multiple, heterogeneous social communities* (DiMicco & Millen, 2007). Though the terms employed differ, the underlying principle remains the same: that multiple audience groups are present simultaneously in a single context and this presence is salient for the self-presenter. Lampinen et al. (2009) likens this to the Oasis song, 'All my people right here, right now'.

For people to face an OMAP, three conditions must be fulfilled. First, their SNS account is connected with multiple audiences (Binder et al., 2009; Marwick and Boyd, 2011). Second, these audiences must hold heterogeneous expectations (or standards) of what they deem to be a desirable self-presentation (Marder et al., 2012). Lastly, privacy settings (e.g. grouping, circles) are not engaged therefore content flows simultaneously without restriction to two or more audiences (Brandztæg, Lüders, & Skjetne, 2010; Bright, Kleiser, & Grau, 2015; Marder et al., 2012). The crux of the OMAP is that content communicated *en masse* may cast a desired impression to certain audiences but an undesired one to others. For a sample of young

Facebook users, Marder et al. (2012) find that befriending employers and guardians is of particular concern, as these audience groups are perceived to hold high standards. Binder and colleagues (2009) concur; associating friending members from the work and family spheres with increased relational tension within the social network. To address the OMAP a number of protective strategies have been observed.

Individuals have been found to 'self-censor' content they communicate about themselves with their audiences in mind (Lampinen et al., 2009; McLaughlin & Vitak, 2012). A recent study of 3.9 million Facebook users reported that approximately three quarters of these had practiced self-censorship of posts over a seventeen-day period. Moreover, this was greater for users with increased audience multiplicity (Das & Kramer, 2013). Another strategy is 'self-cleansing' which involves deleting or de-tagging information that is linked to an individual's account (Lampinen et al., 2009; Lang & Barton, 2015; Peters et al., 2015).

Overall, the OMAP is believed to result in the 'lowest common denominator effect' (LCDE) (Hogan, 2010) whereby people restrict their self-presentation in line with the standards of their strictest audience. For example, on Facebook a person may wish to share content of a mildly sexual nature with their peers however, they choose not to as this would be incongruent with the standards of another audience (e.g. their parents). Marwick and Boyd (2011) find support for the LCDE in their qualitative study observing that Twitter is "a place where the strictest standards apply" (p. 13). Furthermore, as audience diversity differs across sites it is the technology itself that, to an extent, dictates the constraint (Hogan, 2010). Hogan (2010) also argues that self-presentation is likely to be more 'inoffensive' on Facebook where there is high audience diversity but more 'offensive' on niche sites where audience diversity is less. Although the LCDE is well cited and has received some qualitative empirical support it remains largely unsubstantiated.

3. Strongest audience effect (SAE)

Based on the notion of audience 'strength' as discussed in the previous section, we present an alternative and more complete understanding of self-presentation in the presence of multiple audiences. We argue that the LCDE is overly simplistic because it only takes into account audience standards and ignores the 'value' of the self-presentation known to be an important factor in determining the degree of motivation to manage impressions (Leary, 1996). The LCDE assumes that people will regulate their self-presentation to the strictest audience standard even if this audience has little to no value to the presenter. For example, according to LCDE, people would ensure their self-presentation meets the expectations of their ex-partner or ex-boss who remain Facebook 'friends' even though they may no longer care what these people think of them anymore. Conversely, LCDE argues that if an audience is perceived as lenient they will not influence self-presentation however, it is plausible they would if highly valued (e.g. close friends).

We propose that the 'strength' of the audience, which takes into account both the standards and value of an audience, offers a more holistic lens through which to understand self-presentation behavior in the presence of multiple audiences. Thus, self-presentation is influenced, and social anxiety arises, in association with the strongest audience rather than the strictest. We name this effect the 'strongest audience effect' (SAE).

The overall goal of this study is to examine the efficacy of LCDE (i.e. strictest audience) and SAE (i.e. strongest audience) in explaining self-presentation in the

presence of multiple audiences. This is achieved through a multivariate analysis that examines the significance of these effects on a) self-censorship, b) self-cleansing, and c) social anxiety. Furthermore, to provide a deeper insight into the OMAP we investigate the differences between which audience groups are perceived to be the strictest and the strongest audiences in the present sample.

4. Methods

4.1 Sample and procedure

To address the research aim a sample of young Facebook users were recruited using a convenience snowball sampling method in line with previous studies (Baek, et al., 2011; Hollenbaugh & Ferris, 2014). The researchers shared the survey through a number of UK university student email lists and respondents were encouraged to share the survey with others through their own Facebook account. A small monetary donation to a selection of well-known charities was offered as an incentive for every completed survey submitted. This technique yielded a sample of 379 participants, of which 69% were female with an overall mean age of 22 years (SD = 5.5). The majority of the sample were students and identified themselves as British.

Participants completed the survey online in early 2014. First, participants provided demographic information as well as that relating to the intensity of Facebook usage. Second, participants were asked how socially anxious they are about their self-presentation and then to report their perception of the different standards held by the different audience groups they had friended. Third, questions were administered to measure the value of these audience groups, and the participant's general propensity to self-censor and the frequency of self-cleansing. Finally, participants answered scales for control variables.

4.2 Measures

4.2.1 Standards of the strictest audience

To measure the strictest audience standards participants completed an adapted version of the Self-Attributes Questionnaire ([SAQ]; Pelham & Swann, 1989), a measure of the self-concept that is scored in comparison to peers using a 10-point scale. Participants were asked how they 'ought' to be in relation to six negative attributes they possibly associated with on Facebook (unattractiveness, unintelligence, alcohol consumption, use of swear words, recklessness, appearing sexual). McLaughlin and Vitak (2012) support the latter as self-presentational issues for young Facebook users. These six attributes were measured for five different audience groups (guardians, relational partners, employers, acquaintances, close friends). If an audience group was not applicable (i.e. not 'friended' on Facebook or privacy settings restricted access), this audience was omitted from the analysis. Summing the six attributes for each audience then finding the maximum across the five audiences provided a measure of the standards of the strictest audience.

4.2.2 Strength of the strongest audience

To measure the strength of the strongest audience it was necessary to first ascertain the strength of each audience group. The strength was calculated by multiplying the sum of each audience's standards (as described in the above section)

by the perceived value for that specific audience (i.e. Audience strength = [total audience standards x audience value]). Perceived value was measured by asking participants how much they perceive they will lose (socially/economically) if evaluated negatively by each of the five audience groups using a 7-point scale ('Nothing at all' – 'Very much'). To uncover the strength of the strongest audience the maximum was found for strength over the five audience groups (i.e. Max [Strength-Employer, Strength-Guardians, Strength-Close friends, Strength-Acquaintances, Strength- Relational partners]).

4.2.3 Self-censorship

Self-censorship was measured using a 3-item scale where participants were asked how cautious they were when posting updates, photos and making comments, using a 5-point scale ('Not cautious at all' – 'Very cautious', α = .86). The notion of caution has been associated with self-censorship in prior work (Lee & Chan, 2009) and allows for a measure of the most common form of censorship that occurs before information is communicated (see Marwick & Boyd, 2011).

4.2.4 Self-cleansing

Self-cleansing was measured through 3-items by asking participants how often they de-tag or delete photos and delete written communications linked with their profiles using a 5-point scale ('Never' – 'Very often', α = .76).

4.2.5 Social anxiety

To measure social anxiety participants answered questions probing how worried they were about being perceived negatively by 'friends' on Facebook due to content linked to their profile using a 7-point scale ('Not at all' – 'Extremely worried'). We recognize the drawbacks associated with using a single-item measure for social anxiety; this construct was not initially intended as a key component for the study. However, after further theorization we believed its inclusion would enhance insight into self-presentation behavior therefore complementing the key aim of the research. To support the use of this measure the survey was extensively piloted on eighteen young Facebook users aged 18-30 years who communicated their feedback directly to members of the research team. In these conversations the questions were assessed for ambiguity mitigating the risks to reliability (see Alexandrov, 2010). The pilot study data was not included in our main analysis.

4.2.6. Controls

Costa and McCrae's (2008) 10-item anxiety scale was employed to control for trait levels of anxiety (α = .89). Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe's (2007) 7-item scale measure of *Facebook intensity* was used to control for usage intensity (i.e. How ingrained Facebook is in the life of the user, α = .83). Age and gender were also recorded and employed as controls.

5. Results

5.1 Regression results

A series of multiple regressions were conducted to examine the effect of the standards of the strictest audience (IV1) and the strength of the strongest audience (IV2) on three DVs: self-censorship (DV1), self-cleansing (DV2), and social anxiety

(DV3). Control variables: Facebook intensity (CV1), Trait anxiety (CV2), Gender (CV3) and Age (CV4) were also accounted for. The first regression involves self-censorship as the outcome variable. Collinearity statistics were all satisfactory with VIF statistics all below 1.5 (see Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011; Neter, Wasserman, & Kutner, 1989).

The strength of the strongest audience significantly predicted self-censorship (β = .241), however no significant relationship was found between self-censorship and the standards of the strictest audience. Trait anxiety was shown to be positively associated with self-censorship. Whereas age and gender were not significant predictors of self-censorship. The regression results for self-censorship are presented in Table 1.

Further regressions examined the role of the same IVs on self-cleansing. VIFs were satisfactory as all were below 1.4. The strength of the strongest audience significantly predicted how frequently self-cleansing behaviors were reported (β = .192). The standards of the strictest audience were also a significant predictor however, the coefficient was negative (β = -.159), running contrary to the LCDE. Facebook intensity (β = .244) and trait anxiety (β = .157) were also found to have a significant positive relationship with self-cleansing. No significant association was found for age and gender. Regression results for self-cleansing are presented in Table 2.

The final regression examined the significance of the IVs in predicting users' experience of social anxiety. VIFs were again satisfactory with all being less than 1.4. Social anxiety was significantly predicted by the strength of the strongest audience (β = .181) as well as trait anxiety (β = .144). However, the standards of the strictest audience were not significant. Intensity, gender and age were also found to have no effect. Social anxiety regression results are presented in Table 3.

Overall, the results from these three regressions support the efficacy of the SAE (i.e. strongest audience effect) in explaining both self-presentation behavior in the presence of OMAP and the negative emotional effect. Although standards of the strictest audience was significant in predicting frequency of self-cleansing, results do not support the LCDE because standards of the strictest audience predict a lower rather than higher frequency of self-cleansing.

Table 1
Regression results for self-censorship

Variable	β Standardized	t	Significance
Standards of the Strictest Audience	.027	.462	.645
Strength of the Strongest Audience	.241	4.125	<.001**
Facebook Intensity	.067	1.314	.190
Trait Anxiety	.198	3.274	<.001**
Age	.093	1.794	.074
Gender	0.95	1.781	.076

F(6,359) = 7.20, p <.001, R = .33, Adjusted R-squared = .09. *p<.05, **p<.01

Table 2
Regression results for self-cleansing

Variable	β Standardized	t	Significance
Standards of the Strictest Audience	-.159	-2.779	.006**
Strength of the Strongest Audience	.192	3.330	<.001**
Facebook Intensity	.244	4.885	<.001**
Trait Anxiety	.157	2.993	.003
Age	-.097	-1.902	.058
Gender	-.402	-.794	.428

F(6,359) = 9.34, p <.001, R = .37, Adjusted R-squared = .12. *p<.05, **p<.01

Table 3
Regression results for social anxiety

Variable	β Standardized	t	Significance
Standards of the Strictest Audience	.101	.164	.870
Strength of the Strongest Audience	.181	3.061	.002**
Facebook Intensity	.097	1.895	.059
Trait Anxiety	.144	2.644	.008**
Age	-.084	-1.614	.107
Gender	-.010	-.191	.849

F(6,359) = 5.64, p <.001, R = .30, Adjusted R-squared = .07. *p<.05, **p<.01

5.2 ANOVA results

Results will now be presented on the differences in perceived strictness (i.e. total score for standards) and the strength (i.e. total score for standards x value) across the five audience groups. Mean scores with their 95% confidence intervals for perceived strictness and strength for each audience group are provided in Figures 1 and 2, respectively. Two repeated-measures ANOVAs were conducted including 144 participants in these analyses due to the necessity of having friended (without restriction) all five audience groups. Both tests violated the assumption of Sphericity based on the Mauchly test therefore the Greenhouse-Geisser correction was applied (see Field, 2009). There was a significant overall difference across audience groups for both strictness (F[3.39, 484.72] = 99.44, p<.001, Eta = .41) and strength (F[3.47,457.85] = , p<.001, Eta = .40). Pairwise comparisons based on a 95% level of significance illustrated individual differences. Table 4 ranks in descending order for the strictest and the strongest the five audience groups based on the findings of the pairwise comparisons. The results show that employers are perceived as the strongest audience as well as joint strictest with parents/guardians. Hence, the rank order of audience is different for strictness and strength, therefore providing additional insight into who are the most concerning audience groups for the Facebook users in our sample.

Table 4
Ranked order of audiences based on pairwise differences

Rank order	Strictness	Strength
1st	Employers & Guardians	Employers
2nd	Partners	Guardians & Partners
3rd	Acquaintances	Close Friends

4th	Close Friends	Acquaintances

Pairwise differences determined at a 95% level of sig.

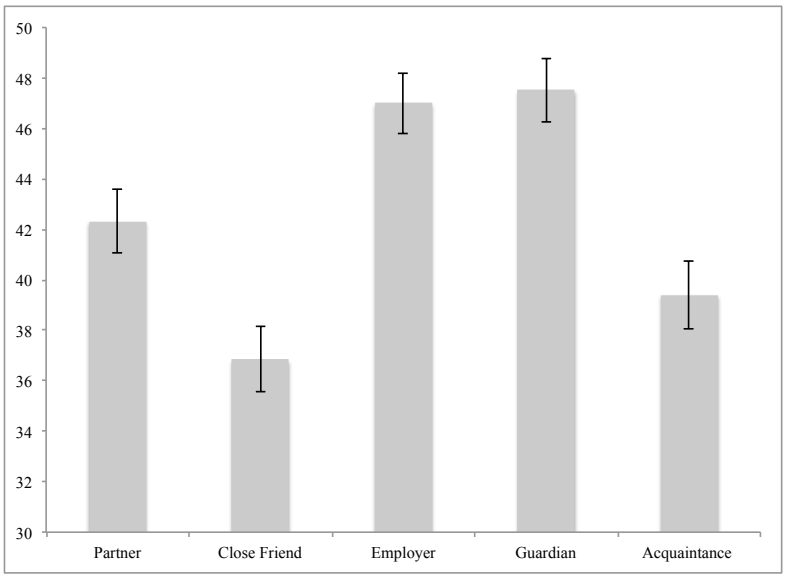

Figure 1. Mean scores and 95% confidence intervals for perceived strictness (i.e. total score for standards) for each audience.

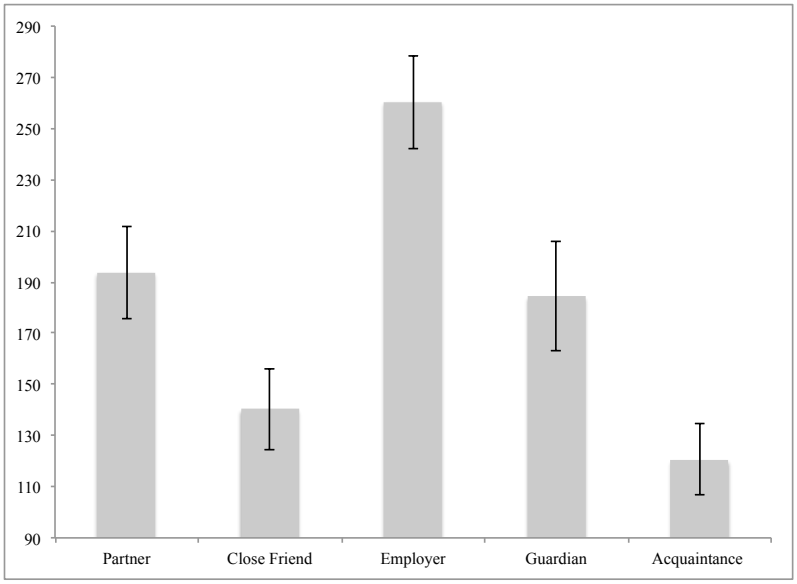

Figure 2. Mean scores and 95% confidence intervals for strength (i.e. total score for standards x value) for each audience.

6. Discussion

The findings in this study support the efficacy of the SAE above the LCDE supporting the need for new insight in this area. For self-censorship and self-cleansing, the strength of the strongest audience was positively associated (ps<.001) with greater caution when communicating content and an increased frequency of self-cleansing. In contrast, standards of the strictest audience did not significantly predict self-censorship (p=.645). It was however a significant predictor of self-cleansing frequency, although the relationship was negative (p<.01). This contradicts the logic

underpinning the LCDE that the strictest audience should evoke increased self-cleansing of content.

For a deeper understanding further correlational analyses were conducted between the strictness of each audience and self-cleansing. The results showed significant negative relationships for close friends and acquaintances (ps<.05) but no significant associations were found for the other audience groups. We therefore infer that close friends and acquaintances are likely to be peers and given this they will be the most likely contributors of content to a participant's Facebook timeline, which may need to be cleansed (see McAndrew & Jeong, 2012; McLaughlin & Vitak, 2012). Thus, if peers hold high standards we assume that content they share on the Facebook wall of the participant will be congruent with the peer's own standards and therefore likely inoffensive consequently reducing the need for the participant to self-cleanse. While this 'do unto others as you would have them do unto you' logic provides an explanation for the counterintuitive finding further research is needed to examine this phenomenon.

The findings from the main analysis also contribute to our knowledge of the negative emotional effects (e.g. social anxiety) associated with the OMAP. The strongest audience rather than the strictest audience was positively associated with social anxiety (p<.001). This concurs with existing work which associates the strength of audience with social anxiety (Jackson & Latané 1981; Leary & Kowalski, 1995). Prior to this study, self-presentation in the presence of multiple audiences was understood by the LCDE that neglects to take into account an audience's 'value', thus leaving a research gap. Our novel contribution has been to close this gap with the theorization and empirical testing of the SAE. Therefore we extend knowledge on self-presentation in the presence of multiple audiences on SNS by showing that focusing on standards is not enough and must be considered in conjunction with the value of the audience. This corresponds with previous social psychology studies that uphold these two factors as co-contributors to levels of motivation to impression manage (Leary, 1996; Leary & Kowalski, 1995, Leary et al., 1994). The SAE perspective does not make obsolete the intuition behind the LCDE (Hogan, 2010; Marwick & Boyd, 2011), instead SAE advances the theory by offering a more holistic lens through which to view and understand self-presentation behavior in the presence of multiple audiences. Whilst SAE provides a more complete theorization to understanding self-presentation and social anxiety the modest adjusted R-squares of our models imply this understanding could further be improved.

As with any research the present study has limitations. We are mindful that the sample comprised mostly millennial aged students from the UK therefore the generalizability of this study is limited beyond this cohort. Future research should examine older users and those from other countries. We also focussed on value as being the level of potential social and economic losses and gains neglecting the two other possible contributing factors: self-esteem, and identity maintenance (Leary, 1996). Further studies should investigate whether self-esteem associated with audience approval can be asssesed using scales. However, assessing the value of an audience in the maintenance of a particular identity is more challenging. This is because identities are likely to be multiple and contemplation of identity which is a more abstract construct (Markus & Nurius, 1986), makes preliminary qualitative work a necessity.

Another avenue for future research would be to consider the notion of *expectancy* - the percieved probability that undesired impressions will be reconciled (Leary & Kowalski, 1995). Such reconciliation may occur through higher

involvement strategies such as apologies or excuses (Schütz, 1998). This is an important factor to account for because if percieved reconcilation is high, social anxiety and the need for immediate online impression management is likely to be lessened (Leary & Kowalski, 1995). Perceived chance of reconciliation is also likely to differ across audiences based on other relational factors such as closeness (McCullough & Witvliet, 2002).

The results of the repeated measures provide a deeper understanding of which audience groups drive the OMAP for the current sample. Employers and guardians are perceived to jointly hold the strictest standards concurring with findings by Marder et al. (2012). However, employers were found to be significantly stronger than guardians. In other words, participants perceived the potential economic and social losses/gains from displeasing employers to be greater than any potential losses/gains from displeasing guardians. It follows that friending employers is associated with the greatest self-presentational constraint and increase in social anxiety, supporting previous research which has identified employers as a concerning audience (Binder et al., 2009). We expect this effect to become more significant over time as our predominantly student sample develop their careers and invest in their relationships with their employers.

Our findings highlight the negative side of context collapse between the work and non-work social spheres supporting the need to keep work connections separate by using SNS such as LinkedIn (see Chiang & Suen, 2015). Close friends were reported as the most lenient audience, however unsurprisingly when value was considered close friends ranked stronger than acquaintances. Although we can draw broad insights into which audiences are of particular concern for our sample it is important to remember that this may differ significantly from person-to-person and at different phases throughout their lives.

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